

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-19 OMB-01 /153 R

DRAFTED BY EA/VN:RHWENZEL:JCM

APPROVED BY D:KRUSH

EA/RA:RNETHERCUT (DRAFT)

EA:MSTEARNS

EA:AWHUMMEL

S/S - MR. LUERS

EA/PRCM:OARMSTRONG

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R 071616Z FEB 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

S E C R E T STATE 025541

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, CH, VS

SUBJ: PARACELS/SPRATLYS

1. VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR PHUONG, AT HIS REQUEST, CALLED ON THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FEBRUARY 5 TO EXPRESS THE GVN'S CONCERN OVER THE PRC ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO THE PARACEL/SPRATLY ISLANDS. PHUONG SAID THE GVN WAS VERY SURPRISED AND BAFFLED AT THE CHINESE MOVE INTO THE PARACELS SINCE THESE ISLANDS HAD BEEN UNDER VIETNAMESE ADMINISTRATION FOR THE LAST TWO CENTURIES. HE ALSO NOTED THE CONCERNS OF OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES ABOUT THIS CHINESE ACTION AND ASKED WHETHER THE US COULD PROVIDE ANY EXPLANATION FOR THE MOVE.

2. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT WE DO NOT TAKE A POSITION ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THESE TERRITORIES SINCE THERE IS NO US NATIONAL OR SECURITY INTEREST INVOLVED. WHAT MOTIVATES THE ACTIONS OF PARTIES TO THIS DISPUTE IS FOR THOSE PARTIES TO EXPLAIN. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE RECENT CHINESE MOVE INTO THE PARACELS REPRESENTS A TURN TOWARD AGGRESSIVE PRC ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. RATHER, IT STEMS FROM A DIFFERENCE OF VIEW OVER SOVEREIGNTY. WE NOTE THAT THE CHINESE HAVE USED THE ARGUMENTS OF SELF DEFENSE IN EXPLAINING THEIR ACTION.

3. PHUONG CONTINUED THAT THE GVN IS NOT ASKING THE US TO TAKE A POSITION ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISPUTE AND UNDERSTANDS THE US RELUCTANCE TO DO SO. HE THEN WENT ON TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE SITUATIONS IN THE PARACELS AND THE SPRATLYS. ONLY THE VIETNAMESE AND THE CHINESE ARE INVOLVED IN THE PARACELS. ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED IN THE SPRATLYS -- I.E. THE PHILIPPINES AND THE ROC. MALAYSIA IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THESE ISLANDS AS IS INDONESIA, ALTHOUGH NOT OFFICIALLY. IT IS NOT ONLY A QUESTION OF POSSIBLE OIL DEPOSITS, IT IS A MATTER OF PRC PRESENCE. THE PRC IS CLEARLY SEEKING A POSITION IN THIS SOUTH CHINA SEA AREA.

4. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY COMMENTED THAT THE SPRATLYS ARE QUITE FAR FROM PRC AIRBASES AND THAT THE DISTANCE BY

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SEA FROM CHINA TO THOSE ISLANDS IS CONSIDERABLE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED IN THE DISPUTE AND THAT THERE WERE NO CHINESE PRESENT IN THE

SPRATLYS. HE BELIEVED THE CHINESE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN MAKING A CASE OF SELF DEFENSE SHOULD THEY MOVE INTO THE SPRATLYS. ANY SUCH MOVE, HE ADDED, WOULD BRING INTO QUESTION PRC RELATIONS WITH THE PHILIPPINES AND NON-

ALIGNED COUNTRIES.

5. PHUONG ASSERTED THAT THE PRC CLAIM OF SELF DEFENSE IN THE PARACELS WAS NOT JUSTIFIED BECAUSE OF THE LONG TERM VIETNAMESE OCCUPATION OF THESE ISLANDS. THE GVN IS NOT IN A POSITION TO DRIVE THE PRC OUT OF THESE ISLANDS. BUT CLEARLY THIS IS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE TERRITORY OF A SMALL COUNTRY WHICH CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE AGGRESSOR IS A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH WAS CREATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF SETTLING SUCH DISPUTES. THE GVN WILL KEEP PRESSING FOR SOME TYPE OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, PERHAPS THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION. BUT THE GVN WAS AFRAID THAT THE PRC WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE JURISDICTION OF SUCH BODIES IN THIS DISPUTE. FURTHER, HE DOUBTED THAT THE PRC WOULD TREAT PEACEFULLY WITH THE GVN ON THIS DISPUTE SINCE THE PRC RECOGNIZED NORTH VIET-NAM AND THE VIET CONG, NOT THE GVN.

6. PHUONG WENT ON TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT THE PRC MFA'S FEBRUARY 4 STATEMENT ON THE GVN REINFORCEMENT OF THE SPRATLYS. HE SAID THE GVN WOULD STAND FIRM ON THE SPRATLYS. UNLESS THE PRC SENT FORCE, THE GVN WOULD NOT MOVE. HE COMMENTED THAT IF THE PRC MOVED AGAINST THE SPRATLYS, IT WOULD BE A MORE SERIOUS SITUATION THAN IN THE PARACELS. THIS WOULD CAST DOUBT ON THE POSSIBILITY

OF DETENTE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IF THE PRC OCCUPIED THE SPRATLYS, THIS WOULD PLACE THE PRC IN A BUSY OCEAN AREA WITH POTENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION OF ITS SEA BED. THE PRESENCE OF THE PRC IN THE MIDST OF THIS AREA WOULD BE VERY QUOTE UNCOMFORTABLE UNQUOTE TO THE COUNTRIES OF THE AREA.

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7. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY REITERATED OUR POSITION AGAINST THE USE OF MILITARY POWER TO EFFECT TERRITORIAL CHANGE. HE CONCLUDED BY NOTING THAT THE PRC WOULD HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO LOSE AND LITTLE TO GAIN BY GOING INTO THE SPRATLYS. RUSH

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NNN

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